



Office of the
Healthcare
Advocate
STATE OF CONNECTICUT

**Testimony of Victoria Veltri
State Healthcare Advocate
Before the Human Services Committee
In support of SB 1085 and HB 6088
March 12, 2013**

Good afternoon, Representative Abercrombie, Senator Slossberg, Senator Markley, Representative Wood, and members of the Human Services Committee. For the record, I am Vicki Veltri, State Healthcare Advocate with the Office Healthcare Advocate ("OHA"). OHA is an independent state agency with a three-fold mission: assuring managed care consumers have access to medically necessary healthcare; educating consumers about their rights and responsibilities under health insurance plans; and, informing you of problems consumers are facing in accessing care and proposing solutions to those problems.

I applaud the committee's initiative in promoting the concepts behind SB 1085, An Act Concerning A Pilot Program for the Provision of Emotional and Behavioral Health Services to Youth as well as HB 6608, An Act Concerning An Integrated System Of Care. OHA has long been aware of the gross disparity in treatment of behavioral health and substance use disorders. As you are aware, we held a hearing in October 2012¹ about barriers to access that highlighted all of the issues that this proposed bill intends to study. We have also applied for a grant for the express purpose of studying the efficacy of the Behavioral Health Partnership and the potential benefits of expanding this delivery model. In addition, the Program Review and Investigations ("PRI") Committee also conducted a detailed investigation of a part of the problem surrounding access to behavioral health services, Access to Substance Use Treatment for Insured Youth, which identified significant problems and proposed several important recommendations, many of which have been included in additional legislation currently under consideration. PRI has also

expanded the initial scope of the study, with a more comprehensive report expected to be released within the next month.

In addition, the Mental Health Services Working Group of the Bipartisan Task Force on Gun Violence Prevention and Children's Safety has recommended the creation of a task force "to conduct a comprehensive study of Connecticut's mental health system and make recommendations for enhancements to the mental health system for 16-25 year olds."² The scope of this recommended task force will encompass each of the elements addressed in these proposed bills. Finally, many of the proposed initiatives are already within the scope of OHA's authority. We also anticipate collaborating and contributing in whatever way necessary to assist with the ultimate work of the task force, consistent with our mission.

Thank you for providing me the opportunity to deliver OHA's testimony today. We look forward to continuing to collaborate and advocate for the consumers of Connecticut in this important matter. If you have any questions concerning my testimony, please feel free to contact me at victoria.veltri@ct.gov.

¹ http://www.ct.gov/oha/lib/oha/documents/publications/report_of_findings_and_recs_on_oha_hearing_1-2-13.pdf

² <http://www.cga.ct.gov/ASaferConnecticut/docs/Mental%20Health%20Subcommittee%20Report.pdf>